



The FLAP

News for the Folks of Lake Accotink Park

www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks

Fall/Winter
07 – 08

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"Whoop Cooks for You?":

Barred Owls at Lake Accotink Park

One Lake Accotink Park resident few visitors will get to meet is the barred owl. This large owl gets its name from its appearance; it is grey-brown and white with bars (stripes) of alternating colors on its underside. Like other owls, the barred owl is generally a nocturnal hunter who spends the daylight hours hiding in dense foliage or in a hole in a tree. Being an opportunistic hunter, however, the barred owl can sometimes be seen hunting late in the day or on cloudy days – especially during nesting season.



Examine a barred owl specimen up close at Lake Accotink Park's main office and visitor's center.

Barred owls hunt by diving onto prey from a perch.

Though voles are the most common prey, barred owls consume a varied diet including rodents and other small animals, roosting birds, frogs and toads, snakes, insects, turtles and occasionally fish.

Perhaps the most vocal of all owls, the barred owl is also known as a hoot owl. Though its calls can be heard year round, courtship begins in February making late winter a good time to listen for them. Male

owls call to attract females who call back in response. As it is often easier to hear a barred owl than to see one, its call "hoo, hoo, too-HOO; hoo, hoo, too-HOO, ooo" (commonly phrased as "Who cooks for you? Who cooks for you all?") readily identifies the noise-maker as a barred owl. These owls have a repertoire of sounds, however, which also includes barking, monkey-like hoots and screams.

Barred owls pair for life. Breeding occurs between March and August. Eggs are commonly laid in holes in trees, but these owls may sometimes appropriate an old hawk or

crow's nest. Female owls sit on the clutch while the male hunts and brings food back to the nest. The eggs will hatch after about a month. Barred owls care for their young for longer than most owls – owlets will stay with their parents for about four months after which they leave the nest but generally settle close by.

Have you ever wondered why owls hunt

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Dredging Up the Facts:

Lake Accotink Park Dredging Project Update

In September 2005 the Park Authority Board approved a contract award to Mobile Dredging and Pumping (MDP) to hydraulically dredge 161,000 cubic yards of silt from Lake Accotink and pump the material to a property owned by Virginia Concrete for dewatering and disposal. The Department of Public Works and Environmental Services (DPWES) is overseeing the construction contract because of their past experience on other similar type projects.

MDP was given notice to proceed on the project in November 2005. The first

phase was to install a 2.8-mile slurry pipeline along a Norfolk and Southern Railroad right-of-way from Lake Accotink to the Virginia Concrete disposal site. The pipeline was completed in June 2006 and hydraulic dredging operations began in July 2006. In order to transport the dredging equipment to the top end of the lake, DPWES authorized MDP to dredge 7,000 cubic yards outside of the contract limits to create an access way.

In the 16 months since the dredging operation began approximately 136,600

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Thanks for Asking: Why is there so much trash in the lake?

This is a question park staff is frequently asked year-round. It is usually followed by, "Why don't you do something about it?" Park staff members agree it is an unsightly and disgusting problem, but it has no easy solution. Part of the issue is due to Lake Accotink Park's location in the Accotink Creek watershed. A watershed is an area of land that drains into a single body of water like a river, creek, lake, etc.



This is Lake Accotink after a heavy rainstorm in 2005.

Approximately 30.5 square miles of the Accotink Creek Watershed drain into Lake Accotink. Lake Accotink is not just the recipient of excess water; everything on our roads, yards and open spaces that can be washed away by water also ends up in the lake. A major source of litter is our storm drains, those mysterious openings that lead under our streets and sidewalks. Many citizens think these lead to sewers or someplace where water is treated and so can be used for dumping yard waste or other trash. Storm

drains do NOT lead to sewers. They lead straight to the nearest creek. When we dump in storm drains, we dump in our water supply because that is ultimately where storm drains lead.

If you live in the central Fairfax area, everything dumped in storm drains ends up in Lake Accotink first. Six major commuter arteries criss-cross the Accotink Creek Watershed: I-66, Route 50, Little River Turnpike,

Braddock Road and I-495. Consider the volume of traffic these roads carry. Even if only a fraction of these drivers litter, it adds up quickly. This is another source of the litter in the lake. When it rains, the storm water acts like a broom sweeping everything on the ground into a storm drain. Everything in the storm drain is washed into the closest creek or stream. What is in the creek or stream is then carried to the next largest body of water: Lake Accotink. Lake Accotink, via the lower part of the Accotink Creek, flows into the Potomac River and eventually ends up in the Chesapeake Bay. *(Continued on page 3)*

10 Things to Do at Lake Accotink Park this Winter!

1. **Trout Fish** - Trout season begins in February. Call 703-569-3464 for your name to be added to the mailing list. You'll receive a flyer with dates and pass fees.
2. **Take a Hike** - Look for animal tracks in the snow. How many can you identify?
3. **Take a Time Out** - Simply come and marvel at how different the park looks in the winter.
4. **Recruit** - Start planning (and building) your cardboard boat and recruiting your crew for the annual Cardboard Boat Regatta on June 1.
5. **Get to Work** - High school and college students should start thinking about a summer job. Open hires for camp counselor positions are March 8 and 10, open hires for marina staff are April 6 and 12. Call 703-569-0285 for more info.
6. **Plan** - Get to work planning that family reunion you've been wanting. Picnic area and pavilion reservations for 2008 start in January. Call 703-324-8732 to start the reservation process January 2.
7. **Get Out of the House...** - but please enjoy the park safely. Ice skating is NOT permitted.
8. **Learn Something New** - Adult art classes start the week of January 7. More information is available at www.fairfaxcounty.gov/parks/parktakes.htm
9. **Go Fish!** - A great family activity. We'll teach you the basics March 8 at 1 pm. Call 703-569-0285 to register.
10. **Get Organized** - What are your children doing for spring break? Check out more information on Lake Accotink Park spring break camps at the beginning of March in spring Parktakes.



Be a Camp Counselor!

Spring Break Camps: March 17 - 21
Summer Camps: June 1 - August 15

Applicants must be at least 18 years old, have experience working with groups of children, love the outdoors and be able to share enthusiasm for the camp activities and lessons.

Attend an Open Hire: March 8 or March 10, 10 am - 4 pm to fill out an application and interview.

Questions? Call 703-569-0285

"Top Ten" Litter Types

The ten most commonly found types of litter items found during Virginia clean-ups match the most commonly found forms of litter at Lake Accotink Park.

1. cigarettes/ cigarette filters
2. plastic beverage bottles
3. Food wrappers
4. Glass beverage bottles
5. Beverage cans
6. bags
7. Caps, lids
8. Cups, plates, utensils
9. Straws/stirrers
10. Balloons



Source:
www.longwood.edu/cleanva

(Canoeing continued from page 1)

at night while most other birds of prey hunt during the daylight hours? Hawks, eagles and owls, for the most part, eat the same types of food – mostly rodents, snakes, toads and other small animals. By varying the times these birds are hunting, they can share the same food supply without having to compete with each other for it.

Owls are specially adapted for hunting in the dark. Owls can see 35 – 100 times better in the dark than people can. One reason is the size of their eyes. Relative to body size, people would need eyes the size of grapefruits weighing five pounds each to see as well as owls in the dark. Even with such great eyesight, however, owls rely more on hearing to find their food. Owls have better hearing than any other bird. An owl's face is shaped like a funnel to help direct sounds to its ear openings, which are large and positioned asymmetrically (one is higher than the other) on opposite sides of its head. Having one ear opening located

higher than the other helps the owl determine important information about the source of the sound such as from which side the sound is coming and whether it is low or high in relation to the owl. While pinpointing the source of a sound, an owl will move its head back and forth.

Although it is far more exciting to see a barred owl alive and in its natural habitat, a deceased barred owl was donated to Lake Accotink Park's visitor's center to be used as an educational tool. This specimen will give visitors the opportunity to look at an owl up close and learn ways to better interact with our wild neighbors.

Meet Lake Accotink Park's night life! Register for a night hike..

- ★ January 11 , 7:30 - 9 pm
- ★ January 12, 7:30 - 9 pm
- ★ February 15, 7:30 - 9 pm
- ★ February 16, 7:30 - 9 pm

\$5 per adult, \$3 per child under 12
Call 703-569-0285 to register.

(Thanks for Asking... continued from page 2)

On the bright side, Lake Accotink filters out a lot of trash and sedimentation from eroding stream banks before it gets to the Bay. The consequence, however, is that Lake Accotink visitors are forced to look at it. The trash is most noticeable in the winter and early spring. During this time of the year, the park has the smallest number of staff whose trash collecting duties are made all the more challenging by freezing water temperatures. The surface of the lake may freeze, but new trash continues to be swept into the lake every day by the simple fact that the creek continues to flow. It is

easier to stay on the top of the trash during the spring and summer when Lake Accotink's marina is staffed and the lake is not frozen. Even then, however, collecting every piece of litter from the lake is a daunting task.

On October 20, over 130 volunteers turned out from the local community, school and civic groups for Lake Accotink Park's annual fall watershed cleanup. They removed over 1500 pounds of trash from the lake, Accotink Creek and the park grounds. A big "thank you" goes out to these volunteers!

(Thanks for Asking...continued from page 1)

cubic yards of silt, or 85 percent of the original contract amount, has been dredged and pumped to the Virginia Concrete disposal site. During the contract period, MDP requested and was granted a no-penalty four-month winter shutdown starting in lake October 2006. Due to the dry weather this fall, MDP was able to dewater the slurry impoundment at an accelerated rate and received permission by DPWES to continue the dredging operations into November as long as the weather permits. It is anticipated that MDP will be granted a winter shutdown again this year. MDP will then work throughout the winter to dewater and consolidate the impoundment in order to restart dredging operations the first week of April 2008.

At the Park Authority's request, DPWES performed a preliminary evaluation to determine if the Virginia Concrete disposal site could accommodate additional dredge material above the 161,000 cubic yards currently specified in the contract. Based on their review, up to 204,000 cubic yards of material can be disposed of at the Virginia Concrete site, and DPWES has agreed to provide \$1,545,000 in additional funding to dredge and dispose of 43,000 additional cubic yards. In June 2006 a major storm caused a significant amount of silt to flow into the marina area reducing water depth. In combination with the recent drought conditions, boat access from the marina to the main lake

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Meet Joe...

Joe Sciuillo began working at Lake Accotink Park as a summer Outdoor Fun Camp counselor after graduating from Anandale High School in 2001. In 2005, he was awarded a degree in Integrated Science and Technology from James Madison University. He worked as a research scientist for two years until deciding he wanted to explore other fields.



visitors and coworkers. "The work environment at Lake Accotink Park cannot be beat. Being able to work outside with supportive people makes it seem like not work at all," he says.

When asked what he would like tell someone about Lake Accotink Park if he could only share one thing, he decided, af-

ter some deliberation, that he would want to share how "caring" and "well rounded" he considers the staff to be at Lake Accotink Park.

Joe currently lives in the North Springfield area. As one might expect, he enjoys playing and watching tennis and other sports in his free time. After Lake Accotink Park, Audrey Moore RECenter is his next favorite park for its tennis, basketball and racquetball courts. His other hobbies include playing the guitar and listening to all kinds of music.

Remembering how much he enjoyed working for the Park Authority, he reapplied to Lake Accotink Park. Joe is currently the park's tennis instructor, teaching at the Spring Break tennis camp and weekend classes. This summer he worked as part of the team supervising Lake Accotink Park's waterfront facilities.

When asked what he likes most about working at Lake Accotink Park, he enthusiastically notes that it is the people with whom he works – both

Private Dog Obedience Sessions



Call 703-569-3464
Monday - Friday
for more information.

Lake Accotink Park now offers private one-on-one dog obedience training. Sessions are customized to your dog's level of behavioral development and unique needs. Classes can be tailored to fit your schedule.

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channel has been limited. DPWES has agreed that a portion of the additional 43,000 cubic yards of dredge material (estimated at 10,000 cubic yards) could be reprogrammed for dredging in the vicinity of the marina.

Based on increasing the total dredge amount to 204,000 cubic yards and the historical production rates of MPD, the dredging operations at Lake Accotink should be completed by fall 2008 and the Virginia Concrete disposal site fully closed by summer 2009.

Fairfax County Park Authority



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ADA Accommodations:

Fairfax County is committed to nondiscrimination in all county programs, services and activities. Reasonable accommodations or alternative formats will be provided upon request. For information, call 703-324-8563 or (TTY) 703-803-3354 for additional information.